Integration of and the Potential for Islamic Radicalization Among Ethnic Turks in Germany

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Abstract

In spite of ongoing improvements, integration of ethnic Turks in Germany remains a challenge from the dominant culture perspective, whereas a deeply ingrained institutional and everyday racism and the lack of legal protection against discrimination pose a challenge to full participation of ethnic Turks from another perspective. In an increasingly xenophobic Europe, particularly Germany, an increase in potential for religious and nationalist radicalization in different groups including ethnic Turks is becoming more and more evident. This increase in radical attitudes is not necessarily caused by a lack of integration, as evidenced among well-integrated individuals.

In view of recent developments toward increased radicalization in Germany and in Europe overall, an important question emerges. Where is this trend going and how will it affect the national security of the United States?

Introduction

Much has been written about integration in Germany from the perspective of the German government and the dominant culture. Ethnic Turks have historically played a significant role in the debate, given that they are the largest ethnic minority and allegedly the least integrated group. So far, little attention has been paid, however, to their and the perspective of other minorities. In this report, integration will be explored from both perspectives; of the dominant culture as well as the ethnic Turkish community.

This report addresses two main questions. First, to what degree are ethnic Turks inclined today to integrate. For this, parallel society, marginalization, and Germany’s complex citizenship policy are examined. Second, the potential for Islamic radicalization among ethnic Turks will be explored.

The overall lack of effective anti-discrimination laws to combat discrimination and an increase in xenophobia in Germany have posed an important barrier to integration and done a great deal to alienate minorities. This alienation, however, is not only a socio-political and economic problem, but may also become a matter of national security for Germany, Europe, and as a result of it, for the United States. Especially in view of an overall increase in radicalization in Germany, not limited to Islam, it is
evident that integration does not preclude radicalization, as evidenced in radical attitudes among well-integrated individuals. The discontent among minorities caused by their marginalization, combined with the current high under- and unemployment among the youth may add to further radicalization that may not be limited to attitudes but also lead to increased action, in the future.

Findings

RQ1: To what degree are Turks inclined today to integrate?
The first generation is less integrated than the second and third generations. However, ethnic Turks are considered the least integrated among minorities; their unemployment and high-school drop-out rates are higher, compared to the dominant culture and other minorities.

Sub-questions

Sub-question 1: Do many ‘Turks’ opt to live in a parallel society separate from mainstream German society?
There is not enough evidence to support the notion that a parallel society exists, in spite of the presence of some Turkish schools and claims of “parallel justice.”

Sub-question 2: Is marginalization a barrier to integration?
Racism has been a substantial barrier to integration in Germany. The anti-discrimination clause in the Basic Law (paragraph 3 (Section 3)) has offered little protection for minorities against discrimination since 1949. So does the anti-discrimination law (Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz (AGG)) passed through the pressure of EU in 2006.

Sub-question 3: What is the role of the citizenship policy in connection with integration?
Germany’s citizenship law discourages dual-citizenship in case of some countries, e.g. Turkey. However, the law permits it in case of citizens of other EU member states.

RQ2: Given their state of integration into German society today, what is the potential for Islamic radicalization among ethnic Turks in Germany?
An increase in potential for Islamic radicalization among the ethnic Turkish community is evident. Radicalization overall is not necessarily caused by a lack of integration, but can be observed particularly among well-integrated individuals.

Evidence

**RQ1: The second and third generations of ethnic Turks are better integrated than the first. However, according to statistics, ethnic Turks are still the least integrated among minorities; their unemployment and high-school drop-out rates are higher, compared to the dominant culture and other minorities.**

Many ethnic Turks do not feel like they are a part of the German society even though half of the approximately 3 million living in Germany (2011) were born there. They are considered among the least integrated minorities in Germany, although improvements from the first generation to the latter are evident. The offspring of the first generation is better integrated. However, unemployment and high-school drop-out rates are still higher among the ethnic Turks, compared to the dominant culture and other minorities:

“The chances of ethnic Turks born in Germany having an *Abitur* (preparatory high-school degree for entrance to universities in Germany; usually obtained at highly selective high-schools called *Gymnasium*) has doubled, compared to the first generation. Yet, this number is still 50 percent lower, compared to the dominant culture,” although nearly half of them were born in Germany. Further, among the 15- to 64-year-old ethnic Turks who were born in Germany, ten percent has not even obtained a high-school diploma; a number that is reportedly seven times higher than for the same age group in the dominant culture.

In spite of their perceived or real shortcomings in context of integration, many ethnic Turks have achieved substantial successes. Intellectuals such as feminist and social scientist Necla Kelek, high-profile lawyer Mehmet Gürcan Daimagüler, co-chairman of Germany’s Green Party Cem Özdemir, film director Fatih Akin, actor, musician, comedian, film director Serdar Somuncu make up the German society. Many have also achieved economic successes as entrepreneurs and investors. Additionally, Turkish restaurants and supermarkets are now a popular part of the culinary and commercial landscape.
in Germany. The community is also becoming an important force in politics. Many organizations such as the Turkish Community Germany (Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland (TGD)) are contributing to the political landscape. The number of ethnic Turks, for example, elected to the Parliament (Bundestag) has more than doubled in the last election. Out of 630 members of the parliament, 11 reportedly have a Turkish background, although, compared to the total population, this percentage is still low (they make up 3.7 percent of total population, 11 represents only 1.75 percent).

Sub-question 1:
In context of a “parallel society,” the existence of Turkish schools and claims of “parallel justice system” which is a sharia-style mediation without consulting the legitimate court systems, were examined. There is not sufficient evidence for the existence of a “parallel society” of ethnic Turks in Germany.

Turkish high-schools (Gymnasium) have been established in cities such as Berlin, Cologne, Hannover Mannheim, and Paderborn. Although Turkish is a mandatory class, in all other classes, the students are taught in German. Non-ethnic Turks are encouraged to attend these schools. The schools have formed in response to the concerns of parents that their children may not have the opportunities in mainstream German schools, as they do in these private schools. The German government cooperates with the schools and considers them “substitute-schools.” Even though the existence of separate Turkish schools can be justified from various perspectives, among other, as a response to marginalization, the curriculum and possible conservative religious agendas, and the schools’ possible connections to the conservative Islamic “Gulen/Hizmet movement” and future implications should not be underestimated.

In context of “parallel society,” journalist Joachim Wagner, in a recently published book "Islamischer Paralleljustiz" (Islamic Parallel Justice), argues that a “parallel justice system” exists that threatens the rule of law in Germany (Rechtsstaat). Mediators reportedly arbitrate outside of the official court system, in case of domestic violence, family feuds, and other instances.

Further research on this topic did not generate sufficient evidence for what would constitute a “parallel justice system” even though the existence of such mediation-cases could be verified among other, in the
“Kurdish-Lebanese” communities.\textsuperscript{15} Overall, little support could be established that such systems exist within the Turkish community to a notable extent.\textsuperscript{16}

In spite of evidence for the presence of “mediation cases,” experts such as Carl Chung, Mobile Counseling Team Ostkreuz for Democratic Development, Human Rights, and Integration\textsuperscript{17}, or Peter Scholz, Vice President of the Berlin District Court Zoo, argue that there are no indications for a parallel justice system. This notion is also supported by the Bavarian Minister of Justice Winfried Bausback\textsuperscript{18} who reports that two and a half years of research has not provided any data that “allows reliable conclusions about the extent” of any such cases which would support that a parallel justice system exists. Mr. Bausback, however, confirms that there are incidents and cautions about underreporting.

In conclusion, even though there is insufficient evidence that would support the notion of any “parallel society” in Germany, particularly, of ethnic Turks, any “mediations” outside of the official court system are very concerning and deserve utmost attention and immediate action.

\textbf{Sub-question 2:}

\textbf{Racism and discrimination are substantial barriers to integration and participation of ethnic Turks.}

Integration may most efficiently be summarized as a barrier-free-participation regardless of one’s race, national origin, religion and other personal features. Integration is additionally a two-way street where the dominant culture is expected to open the channels of a barrier-free-participation for the minorities by discouraging discrimination and exclusion with the support of suitable laws and public policies. Minorities on the other hand, are expected to learn the official language of the country, be open and willing to participate; and realistically, also to assimilate at least to a minimum degree to ensure an efficient exchange and at some point, ideally, integrate fully. However, in Germany, integration, for the most part, has not been a two-way street. There has traditionally been insufficient protection from discrimination even though the anti-discrimination clause has been anchored in the constitution (Basic Law, article 3 paragraph; 3) since the beginning of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949.\textsuperscript{19}

The avenues for filing complaints and thereby obtaining remedies in cases of discrimination where the \textit{Basic Law} would apply have historically neither been present, nor effective. Additionally, \textit{Basic Law} only regulates the relationship between government and the people. A law that discourages discrimination
among private parties such as private sector job applicants and housing applicants did not exist until the anti-discrimination law Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz (AGG) was passed in 2006. AGG was not a voluntary accomplishment, but rather required to meet minimum requirements of the EU.

The sentiment of the environment in which the law was passed is reflected in its content and the little protection that the law offers. Even in its current form, the AGG is still very controversial.\textsuperscript{20} There is also a lack of research, data, and statistics on discrimination. Germany, for example, “has no separate category of offenses for “hate crimes” involving violence. Nor does it explicitly provide for higher sentences for them. But the courts can still take hate motivation into account during sentencing using general sentencing principles.”\textsuperscript{21} Instead of separate statistics for hate crimes, The Federal Ministry of Interior keeps track of “politically motivated crimes” which includes left-wing and right-wing political crimes, and crimes identified as “hostility toward foreigners” (fremdenfeindliche Straftaten). Whereas right-extremist and hostility toward foreigners is treated separately in this case,\textsuperscript{22} based on the separate definitions, it is unclear how Germany keeps track of the overlapping numbers in this case. It is noteworthy that this “politically motivated crimes” statistic also includes sedition and treason.\textsuperscript{23}

Discussion on racism generally focuses on right-extremists. Institutional racism and racism among the general population are rarely discussed. This explains why even in the case of the National Socialist Union (NSU) related murders,\textsuperscript{24} the official NSU Commission in its final report, stated that there were no indications for institutional racism in the handling of the case.\textsuperscript{25} However, much evidence, such as the handling of the murder cases overall and the shredding of important files that could have shed light into the case, supports the opposite notion.\textsuperscript{26}

Moreover, the “German identity” poses a significant barrier to integration as even well-integrated ethnic German minorities are often considered “foreigners.” Therefore, many minorities try to find ways to deal with their identity. Since ethnic Turks generally are not accepted as Germans, one journalist and an outspoken representative of the ethnic Turkish community, Kamuran Sezer, refers to himself as a “Turk with a German passport.”\textsuperscript{27}

In conclusion, from the perspective of the German government, integration seems to be a one-sided task, even though, officially, the opposite is claimed. Otherwise, the lack of legal protection, research, education, and data on discrimination and racism versus the over-supply of debate, research,
publications, and “action plans” is difficult to explain. Unless a change in perception toward minorities occurs in Germany, the problems associated with so called integration will only worsen over time.

**Sub-question 3:**

Germany’s citizenship law discourages dual-citizenship in case of some countries, e.g. Turkey, however, permits in case of citizens of other EU member states.

Germany officially discourages dual-citizenship. Regardless, dual-citizenship is a possibility for many Germans. For example, citizens of EU member states or Germans who live abroad and have the right to become naturalized citizens in their host country, as long as they apply for a permission to keep the German citizenship (*Beibehaltungsgenehmigung*); citizens of states that do not allow renouncing of citizenship are also allowed to be naturalized while remaining a citizen of the country of their origin. 

This official prohibition disproportionately affects ethnic Turks, but not all of them; a situation which adds to the state of confusion concerning Germany’s citizenship policy. Some Turkish citizens are eligible for dual-citizenship, depending on which state they live. The federal law can apparently be interpreted differently in various states. Over 60 percent of non-Turkish applicants for naturalization are able to obtain dual-citizenship while at the same only 27.7 percent of the Turkish applicant can do so.

In response to continuing pressure by the Turkish community, German government recently updated its “option-duty” (opportunity to remain a dual-citizen until age 23; required to choose between the parents’ and German citizenship by age 23) policy. Recent changes in the law suggest that, individuals who qualify for the *Optionspflicht*, are eligible to file for a permission (*Beibehaltungsgenehmigung*) to keep both citizenships. This permission however, is granted only in cases of undue hardship. In case of failure to file and obtain this permission, the affected individuals would lose their German citizenship, if they don’t renounce the other citizenship.

For the Turkish community, the recent improvements to the *Optionspflicht* are too minor. The former leader of the community in Germany (TGD), Kenan Kolat, states that the new policy makes matters only more complicated and offers little relief in the dilemma that many ethnic Turks face—having to decide between their Turkish and German citizenship.
Up until 2000, the German citizenship policy was significantly based on the principle of lineage (Abstammungsprinzip (Ius Sanguinis)) according to the law from 1913 („Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetzes“ (RuStaG)). Major reforms were made in 2000 which also includes the change from principle of lineage to the principle of place of birth („Geburtsortsprinzips“ (Ius Soli)) for children born in Germany. 

In this context, it should be noted that, contrary to a wide-spread belief, not all children born to foreign nationals, obtain citizenship by birth. The law applies to children born after January 1, 2000 and certain requirements must be met. The requirements include that parents must have had their official residence in Germany for at least eight years, and their residence permits must be unlimited. (See § 4 (1), citizenship law).

The history of Germany’s citizenship policy illustrates the overall negative sentiments toward minorities in Germany. Hans-Peter Uhl, a conservative national lawmaker and member of the Parliament’s interior affairs committee, argues that “individuals with dual nationality, if involved in any criminal activities, can evade the judicial authorities by using their second passport. This creates all sorts of problems for us. Countries have different legal systems and different cultures, and we have to take that into account.”

This raises the question why dual-citizenship is a legal option for many. Additionally, the low probability of a dual-citizen being involved in criminal activities that pose a problem to Germany’s judicial system defies the argument and allows for an opportunity to explore more feasible explanations for Germany’s continuation of exclusive citizenship policy.

**RQ2: Increase in potential for Islamic radicalization among the ethnic Turkish community is evident.**

Radicalization overall is not necessarily caused by a lack of integration, but can be observed particularly among well-integrated individuals.

Germany’s *Office for the Protection of the Basic Law* reports an increase in “Islamist Organizations nationwide”: 42,550 members in 2012, up from 38,080 in 2011, even though the increase is reportedly due to the first time inclusion of Salafists (4,500).
Since beginning of the war in Syria, 2000-3000 individuals from Europe—700 from France, 300 from Germany—went to Syria to fight in the war, compared to approximately 70\textsuperscript{37} from the USA. Additionally, 5000\textsuperscript{38} more from Europe are expected to join the war. A shorter distance from Europe to Syria versus the USA can hardly explain the alarming difference in the numbers.

There seems to be not only an increase in Islamic, but in other forms of radicalization in Germany as reflected in the statistics for Politically Motivated Crimes\textsuperscript{1}—overall increase 15+ percent, plus 11+ percent increase in xenophobic crimes—provided by the Office for the Protection of the Basic Law.\textsuperscript{39}

However, there is no clear evidence that the ethnic Turkish community stands out\textsuperscript{40} in regard to possible radicalization, even though an increase in conservative religious attitudes and vulnerability for recruitment of Islamist nature is observable.

The membership in two representational organizations such as the Türkische Hizbullah (TH) apparently remained constant from 2011-2012: 350, so did the Milli Gorus with 31,000 members. Religious radicalization among ethnic Turks is still a concern, given that religion seems to play an increasing role among the younger and more educated individuals of Turkish descent. Der Spiegel reports that a representational study among German-Turks showed that two-third of the 15-29 year-old individuals surveyed were in favor of the controversial Koran distribution events launched by Salafists in many cities in Germany, in 2011.\textsuperscript{41} The survey additionally shows that many are willing to support Islamists with donations. Compared to their younger counterparts, among the 30 to 49 year-olds, 54 percent find the Koran-campaign “rather bad” or “very bad.” The support for the campaign decreases among the individuals beyond the age of 50; only one third supports the campaign. Notable is also that among the surveyed, the campaign finds more support among the better educated. The implication is that at least Islamization, or becoming more religious, is not necessarily caused by a lack of integration, but can be observed particularly among well-integrated individuals. Moreover, even though it is

\textsuperscript{1} Please note that politically motivated crimes in Germany overall, are defined as crimes that target the German government exclusively. Therefore, an increase of 11+ percent in xenophobic crimes, for example, is not included in the politically right motivated crimes statistics.
less likely that better educated individuals would be more prone to support violence, they are apparently likely to be more religious. 42

“Auffällig ist, dass unter den Befragten, die keinen oder einen niedrigen Schulabschluss haben, die Zustimmung zu der Koranverteilung am niedrigsten ist.” (What is striking is that among the respondents who have no or a lower school degrees, the approval of the Salfists’ Koran distribution campaign is lowest.)

This leaves the USA with the following question: why are well-educated ethnic Turks of the second and third generation becoming more religious and what will these developments translate into, in the future? Are the ethnic Turks representational for other minority groups in Germany, Europe?

However, the community affected by possible Islamist recruitment is very diverse, as the example of Burak Karan, a successful national soccer player, who died while fighting in Syria demonstrates.43

Future Trends:

The recent European Parliamentary election in May illustrated an alarming overall tendency for radicalization in Europe.44 Right-wing parties in France, Germany, Denmark, Austria, and the UK, recorded substantial gains. An increase in right-wing radicalization raises concern as it not only corresponds with other forms of radicalization45 but may even be encouraging an Islamic response.

It is important to emphasize that Islamic radicalization is not a homogenous phenomenon across certain minority groups. More and more individuals also from the dominant culture, who have no initial connection to Islam, subscribe to a radical interpretation of the religion as illustrated in the cases of the conservative preacher Pierre Vogel46 and Sven Lau.

As Islamic expert Claudia Dantschke accurately confirms: Islamic radicalization such as Salafism is a “youth phenomenon” (Jugendphänomen)47 ranging from search for community, belonging, identity, self-esteem, to purpose in life. Exclusion as often practiced in Germany for various reasons, only makes the
matter worse, whereas inclusion could be an effective method of prevention against future radicalization.
WORKS CITED


„The term “Parallel Societies” is in fact a German neologism (Parallelgesellschaften) that was created in 1996 for the purpose of describing secluded communities of immigrants in Germany. [...]Meyer (2002: 343-346) suggests five indicators for the examination of the formation of parallel immigrant societies:

i. ethnocultural or religious-cultural homogeneity of an immigrant group
ii. economic segregation and civil society segregation
iii. duplication of majoritarian institutions
iv. (technically speaking) self-induced isolation as a result of discrimination
v. if all four criteria apply, then spatial segregation also constitutes an indicator, e.g. isolation within a specific area of the city.”


“Supporters regard the Hizmet movement inspired by US-based Turkish preacher Fethullah Gulen as the benign, modern face of Islam, but critics question its motives.”


"Die Clans und die sogenannten Friedensrichter stammen vor allem aus dem kurdisch-libanesischen Milieu, sie kommen aus palästinensischen Flüchtlingslagern. In Neukölln stammen nur sieben Prozent der Bewohner aus arabischen Ländern. Die Liste der Intensivtäter führen sie aber ganz weit oben an. 47 Prozent der Serienstraftäter tragen arabische Namen. Der Anteil der türkischstämmigen Serientäter ging hingegen von 33 auf 24 Prozent zurück, berichtet Mengelkoch:


83 Prozent der Muslime in Deutschland lehnten laut Bundesinnenministerium das islamische Rechtssystem der Scharia klar ab, hielt Ülker Radziwill (SPD) dem Autor entgegen – nur 4,9 Prozent befürworteten es."

(English: German Muslims, have a "diversity of views" about the role of the Koran and Sharia: "Many Muslims do not even know such a parallel justice," said Chung. He therefore warned against ethicizing this or connecting it to a
religion. And even if "the seriousness of the problem was not to be denied" - for example, when serious crimes never reached state courts - Wagner lacks "the basis for his statement that this phenomenon ("parallel justice system") endangers our legal system."

According to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, 83 percent of Muslims in Germany reject the Islamic legal system of Sharia, Ülker Radziwill (SPD) explained, and only 4.9 percent support it.)


“No one should be treated favorably or unfavorably, based on gender, background, race, language, national origin, belief system, religious or political beliefs or disability.” (Niemand darf wegen seines Geschlechtes, seiner Abstammung, seiner Rasse, seiner Sprache, seiner Heimat und Herkunft, seines Glaubens, seiner religiösen oder politischen Anschauungen benachteiligt oder bevorzugt werden. Niemand darf wegen seiner Behinderung benachteiligt werden.)"


„Kaum ein Gesetzesprojekt in diesem Jahrzehnt so umstritten wie das AGG.“ (Hardly any bill in this decade was as controversial as the AGG).


“Germany has apologized at the UN for mistakes made while investigating the NSU murder series, which were allegedly committed by a neo-Nazi trio. German leaders have publicly apologized for the way the case was handled.”


Die Zahl der politisch motivierten Straftaten ist im Jahr 2013 in Deutschland deutlich angestiegen. Insgesamt wurden 31.645 Straftaten und 2.848 Gewalttaten registriert, was einer Steigerung von 15,3 Prozent bzw. 15,6 Prozent entspricht (2012: 27.440 bzw. 2012: 2.464). Überdurchschnittlich fällt der Zuwachs bei Straftaten, die dem linken Spektrum zuzuordnen sind, aus (+40,1 Prozent). Politisch rechts motivierte Straftaten nahmen von hohem Niveau leicht ab (-3,3 Prozent). Erneut kam es allerdings zu einem Anstieg fremdenfeindlicher Delikte (+11,2 Prozent). (Please note that politically motivated crimes in Germany overall, are crimes that allegedly target the government exclusively. Therefore, an increase of 11+ percent in xenophobic crimes, for example, is not included in the politically right motivated crimes statistics.)


